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THE
ADVENTURES
OF
MELINDA.

[Price One Shilling.]

1608/4083.



THE
ADVENTURES
OF

MELINDA;

A LADY of DISTINCTION
now Living.

Founded on Real, Authentic Facts, and
such diverting and surprizing Incidents as
can scarce be parallell'd in History.

*Be warn'd ye Fair! Melinda's Follies shew,
Lest, treading in her Steps, you are undone.*



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1749.

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THE
ADVENTURES
OF
WILLIAM
A. DABY OF BRISTOL
AND HIS

TRAVELS IN THE
WEST INDIES
AND THE
ADJACENT ISLANDS

IN TWO VOLUMES
BY
WILLIAM A. DABY

LONDON: PUBLISHED BY
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THE
ADVENTURES
OF
MELINDA.

IT would be an extreme difficult Point to decide, whether Men of Fortune have been greater Sufferers by the Dilatoriness, Chicane, and Knavery of the Law, when they have been necessitated to enter into its dreary *Meanders*, or from the Cheats and Abuses of Sharpers, when they have resigned themselves up to a vicious Habit of Gaming.—*Horatio* sufficiently participated of the Evils of both. — He was not above the Age of eighteen Years when his Father died, who left his Effects, which were very considerable, in the Hands of such honest Guardians, that *Horatio*, when he came of Age, was obliged to apply to the Justice of Law, and the Equity of *Chancery*, to recover what was his indubitable Right ; which,

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nevertheless, he could not obtain the Possession of, till after a tedious Suit of ten Years Continuance ; whereby his Fortune was so much curtailed, that scarce a fourth Part of his Father's personal Estate came into his Hands, altho' he was the only Son and Heir to his Possessions, and as such, during his Father's Life-time, he had always been exceedingly indulged in those Pleasures to which he had an Inclination, of which *Play* was not the least.

Horatio, on his Father's Decease, found himself deprived of the Means of pursuing his favourite Diversion ; for his careful *Guardians* immediately packed him to the *University*, with such a pitiful Allowance as would scarce provide him with Necessaries. He had drank too deeply of the Pleasures of the Town to relish a College Life ; and began to cast about how he should manage to live like a Gentleman, till that Day arrived which should make him of Age, and free him from the Power of his *Guardians*. So, quitting the University privately, he hastens to *Town*, where he soon learned that there were Persons enough always ready to furnish any *Minor*, that was Heir to a Fortune like his, with *Cash*, if he could bring himself to a Compliance with their exorbitant Terms.

Horatio thought it no Time to hesitate upon their Articles, as he could not support a Town Life without Money, and his *Guardians*

dians Allowance was too mean, even to support him at the College like a Gentleman Student : so that he soon complied to pay an extravagant Interest, for the Purchase of his Pleasures, till he should arrive at Age. But, when the wished-for Day came that brought that Period about, how was he surprized, on Application to his Father's righteous *Trustees*, to be put into Possession of his Fortune, in finding himself absolutely refused.

It would be to little Purpose to rehearse the several Evasions they made use of on this Occasion, in order to keep the young Gentleman's Patrimony in their own Hands, where they alledged it was very secure ; and that by drawing it thence he would inevitably ruin himself, from the violent Propensity he had to *Gaming*. Neither would they condescend to discharge any of those Debts that he had contracted in his *Minority*, so that he soon found, he had no other way to deal with them but by commencing a *Law-Suit*.

This Step, to which he was compelled by Necessity, proved very expensive ; and during the Continuance of it, he married a Lady, who had little else beside Beauty, Wit, and Agreeableness, to recommend her. Neither could he expect any other Fortune, as the Law had not, as yet, given him any Thing to furnish out a Jointure suitable for a married Wife.

By this Lady he had several Children, of whom *Melinda* was the only one that lived any considerable Time. But the Costs of the Law-Suit, and his Extravagancies in Gaming, both before and after his coming at the Possession of that Moiety of his Fortune which the Law left him, disabled him from leaving his Daughter any more than was scarcely sufficient to match her to a Mechanick; tho' he had given her an Education suitable to a much higher Sphere.

As *Melinda* was descended from a good Family, and had a sufficient Share of Wit and Beauty, her Accomplishments soon rendered her too conspicuous to want Admirers: but, as her Fortune was so very slender, they seemed to pay their Addresses rather through Hopes of obtaining a Gratification of their brutal Passions, than with any Desire to her Advantage in the matrimonial State. But as her Eyes were charming, they were also very discerning; which soon made her see the Drift of her Lovers, and that notwithstanding all the fine Compliments, and hourly Protestations, which were continually made to her; yet, unless she would sacrifice her Virtue to their Desires, there were no Hopes of her benefiting herself by her Adorers.

Though *Melinda* was capable of inspiring Love, yet she did not appear framed to receive any of its Impressions; whether it was from a Coldness in her Nature, a rigid Vow
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of Chastity, or from the true Principles of Virtue having been infused into her by the Care of her Mother, she still continued deaf to all the Overtures and Promises that were made to seduce her. And although then but at the Age of Sixteen, she had Sense enough to distinguish between her own true Interest, and the sensual Views of her Lovers.

She, being one Day visiting a Lady of Fashion, happened to meet with an antient Gentleman, that was a Widower, called *Lorenzo*, who had a very great Estate. He was instantly so smitten with her Beauty, and sprightly Conversation, that he became from that Moment deeply enamoured with her. But being sensible that his Years would not permit him to waste much Time in Courtship; and also having a strong Mistrust that he should never be able to obtain the young Lady's Consent to make him her Spouse, purely from the Prevalency of his own personal Accomplishments, he resolved first to ask her Father's Permission to make his Addresses to her; promising withal, that if he could prevail with *Melinda* to have him, that he would marry her without requiring any Fortune of him, and would also settle upon her as good a Jointure, in case she should survive him, as either of them could wish for.

Horatio, well knowing the Narrowness of his own Circumstances, and thoroughly weighing

weighing the great Probability of *Melinda's* out-living the old Gentleman, listened very attentively to his Proposals ; and was very well inclined to accept of one older than himself for his Son-in-law.——He therefore soon took an Opportunity of opening the Affair to his Daughter. Although *Melinda* had not fixed her Inclinations upon any of those young and gay Sparks that were continually accosting her, nor had any previous Engagement upon her Hands, or any distant View of profiting by Matrimony ; yet the Inequality between *Lorenzo's* Years and her's gave her such a great Aversion to this antient Lover, that she at first absolutely refused consenting to her Father's Request, and could scarcely credit that *Lorenzo*, notwithstanding his advantageous Proposals, was in earnest, till *Horatio* made her thoroughly sensible of it, by informing her, that the old Man had married his first Wife for the Sake of her Fortune, which was very considerable ; and therefore was willing to venture the second Time purely for Love, though *Melinda* could not think it to be any other than mere Dotage.

To the Father's Entreaties for this young Lover, were joined the Sollicitations of all her Friends and Acquaintance, who assured her that if a Lady of her Youth and Sprightliness managed Matters rightly after Wedlock, that the old Gentleman's Fondness
would

would soon bring him from the Wedding-Sheets to a Winding one ; and that the more she caressed him, the sooner she should find herself an opulent Widow, instead of the miserable Wife that she imagined herself going to be.

Lorenzo was indeed already past his grand Climacterick ; it is therefore no Wonder that *Melinda* should disrelish him, either for a Lover or a Husband. But as Interest seldom fails of having Advocates, and Money always procures Friends ; so old *Lorenzo's* Cause had so many strenuous Backers, joined to the indispensable Commands of *Melinda's* Father, that, much against her Will, she was at last prevailed on to become the old Gentleman's Bride : And *Lorenzo* had the Marriage celebrated with as much Pomp and Splendor as possible, thinking thereby to endear himself the more to the lovely *Melinda*, by shewing her that he begrudged no Expence, either on her Person, or her Pleasures. Though perhaps the Lady was much better pleased with the Festivity of the Celebration of their Nuptials, than with the Joys of Consummation. However, she treated *Lorenzo* with all the Fondness and Endearments that could possibly invigorate those remaining Sparks of Fire that were left in his Blood ; thereby fully convincing him, that, though young, she was capable of fully performing her Duty of
loving

loving and cherishing him; whenever he was inclined to demand it.

Old *Lorenzo* was entirely charmed with the constant and affectionate Caresses of his young Wife, and wished for nothing more than an Ability to return them, which his Years would not permit of; and *Melinda*, for her Part, comforted herself with an entire Reliance on her Friends Promises, that the old Gentleman would not long survive his Nuptials, with such a young and sprightly Lady. Almost a Twelvemonth passed on, (a tedious Time to a Wife in her Situation !) and yet not the least View of his being nearer to make her happy in becoming a Widow, than she could expect from him as a Wife. But, however, as he promised before Marriage to make her Mistress of all his Fortune, and to maintain her in the greatest Splendor, she took care to remind him of it, and he accordingly kept his Word with her, by purchasing the richest Furniture, Jewels, and Equipage, that could be bought for her Use, and daily presenting her with the most precious Nick-nacks and Bagatelles that could be procured.

All these Favours, Kindnesses, and magnificent Living, could not satisfy the Heart of *Melinda*, which was continually wishing for Widowhood: But in order to pass her melancholy Days (as she called them) the better, she resolved to divert herself by visiting



ing her Acquaintance, and making use of some Recreation, to extirpate the disagreeable Thoughts of passing her Youth in the Arms of such an old Lump of Impotency as was *Lorenzo*; whose superannuated Caresses she abhorred in her Soul, nor would have endured them, only in hopes that they would contribute to hasten his End. For which Reason she was continually, when at home, sitting on his Knee, stroaking his Cheek, kissing, tickling of him, and using all other Provocatives, in order to make him believe that he was not above thirty; and indeed, it would have made her Life much easier, if she could have found any Motives to have persuaded herself so. — Thus they were continually cooing and billing when together; and she would often protest, that he had not so much as a grey Hair in his Head; which she might very well assure him of, as it was bald all over.

But, as I said before, this way of spending her youthful Days, in endeavouring to excite old *Lorenzo* to the Performance of an impossible Task, grew at last so irksome to her, that she was resolved no longer to lead a recluse Life, but to pass the Remainder of the Time, that they must be together, in innocent Diversions and Gallantry. Whereupon she acquainted her Husband, that she found the sedentary Life, she had so long lead within Doors, very much impaired her

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Health,

Health, and would, if she continued it, bring upon her, in a little Time, some violent Disease; therefore begged of him to permit her to go a little abroad, and see Company, in order to drive off the melancholy Thoughts of that black and dreadful Distemper which so apparently threatned her, and which she found to increase upon her daily more and more.

Lorenzo had too much Value for his young Wife, to deny her so reasonable a Request, as this seemed to be; especially, as she assured him, that the greatest Diversion would be but a tedious Punishment out of his dear Company, were it not on account of her Health, which she was obliged to do her Endeavour to preserve, purely for his Sake, who loved her so well.——Which gilding of the Pill made the old Gentleman swallow it the easier. So he readily gave his Consent to her going abroad, and visiting, not only out of regard that such innocent Recreation might be conducive to her Health, but might also give him an Opportunity of refreshing his own; which he found considerably impaired of late, by his too constant Attendance at *Venus's* Altar, whose Fires he vainly attempted to make blaze, from that small Spark which was left in his damp Match.——In a Word, *Lorenzo*, who had all his Life-time, till he fell in Love with *Melinda*, been accounted a boon Companion,



panion, and used, notwithstanding his Years, to dispense with a Bottle or two of a Night, now finding a more than ordinary Decay of Spirits, began to think of exhilarating them, by assuming his old Practice, whilst his Lady was abroad a visiting.

As *Melinda* was reckoned to resemble her Father in many Things, so, like him, she had a violent Propensity to Gaming; which her Visiting afforded her frequent Opportunities to indulge, unknown to her old Husband, as several Ladies, whose Houses she frequented, kept publick Nights for Play—at which she, by degrees, became a constant Attendant. And *Lorenzo*, never being niggardly in his Allowance for Pin-money, furnished her with a sufficient Stock to begin with, which she had the good Fortune, by a lucky Run at first, to improve very much in a short Time.

Melinda's Youth, Beauty, Gaiety, and Sprightliness, could not pass undistinguished in public Company; and several Persons of the first Rank, that frequented the Assemblies where she used to visit, began to pay their Compliments to her, on account of her wonderful Charms and brilliant Conversation; their Pretensions being the more encouraged by her having old *Lorenzo* for a Husband. Amongst these was the Earl of _____, whose Passion for Play and the

Fair Sex is well known, Lord ———, and a Gentleman named *Marcus*.

Though Fortune favoured the young *Melinda* at first setting out, yet, being one Night at my Lady *B—*'s, in Company with the famous Sharper Captain ———, whose Success at Gaming is too well known to cause any Doubt of his manner of Play, she happened to lose such a large Sum as was nearly double to all her former Winnings; and not having a Sufficiency of Bills or Cash about her to discharge the Debt, was obliged to promise him Payment the next Night, when they were to meet at the same Lady's House, in order to play out another Party.— This Disaster plunged *Melinda* into the greatest Affliction. She durst not ask old *Lorenzo* for such a large Sum of Money at once, without giving him some more plausible Account of the Use it was designed for, than she could at present invent. And she had been obliged before to pledge several of her Jewels, to make up some Losses that she had met with, though but trifling in Comparison to the last, which even the Remainder of her Brilliants would not fetch Money enough to satisfy.

The old Gentleman knew nothing of his Wife's taking so much Delight in Play, nor did he in the least mistrust it, as she seldom took a Card in Hand when at home or in his Company. And as he usually spent his
Evening

Evening with some Bottle Companions at the Tavern, he seldom came home either soon or sober enough to be apprized of what Hours she kept, who generally had Dexterity enough to quit her Company so as to get home before him ; but if, at any time, it happened otherwise, she had always some plausible Excuse ready at hand to make him easy.

Melinda had a trusty Waiting-Maid called *Aspatia*, who being much older than herself, had seen more of the World, and consequently was the fittest Person she could make a Confident of, in this intricate Affair of making up the Sum, that was to enable her to keep her Honour the next Night with the Captain. — She immediately communicated the melancholy News of her Loss to *Aspatia*, who could not for the present think of any other Expedient, whereby to satisfy it, otherwise than by pledging the Remainder of her Jewels, which, she alledged, tho' they would not amount to the total Sum wanted, yet perhaps they might be less at a Loss in contriving Means to obtain the rest, than they should be for the whole. —

This was instantly agreed upon, and *Aspatia* took the first Opportunity of carrying all her Lady's Jewels and Ornaments to a Person whom she was acquainted with, that was accustomed to furnish Ladies with Money, that were distressed, on such Occasions, on the like Security, with the greatest Secrecy.

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But he would lend no more upon them than what would not pay *Melinda's* Debt by Forty Guineas ; which she was obliged to take, or go without—though what to do for the remaining Forty Pieces puzzled them as much as the Want of the whole Sum.

After canvassing many Projects, that offered to their Inventions on this Occasion, and finding none to answer their Purpose completely, it struck into *Aspatia's* Head, to persuade her Mistress to make trial of some of her Admirers, that had so often made Protestations of their Devotion to her Service, which *Aspatia* could not be ignorant of, as several of them had been tampering with her, in order to obtain her Assistance in forwarding them in her Lady's good Graces. — In fine, this was the dernier Resort of their Consultation ; and as my Lord ——— was the Person whom either *Aspatia* was best acquainted with, or to whom *Melinda* rather chose to be obligated for such a Favour, he was the Man fixed upon to apply to.

Aspatia did not in the least want that necessary Qualification of a Waiting-maid called Assurance ; and having had several amorous Adventures herself, in her younger Days, she was not in the least afraid to venture herself with any Gentleman in private now, when Years and Experience had taught her how to play her Cards with the Male Sex, so as to come off no Loser by any Rencounter. In

a Word — she readily undertook the Message, and waited on Lord — at his Lodgings, from whom she had before received a Piece or two for Secret-Service Money, to engage her Lady's Affection to him, with a Promise of a handsome Recompence, if she could bring Matters so to bear between them, that his Lordship might have an Opportunity of cornuting old *Lorenzo*. But, with all her Skill and Dexterity, she could not as hitherto bring *Melinda* to hearken in the least to any such Proposals; whether it was owing to the virtuous Principles she had imbibed with her Education, or from a Dread that the unlucky Miscarriage of such an Amour might for ever discard her from her Husband's Favour, and dash all her hopes of one Day becoming a rich Widow, in View of which only she had consented to marry.

Neither would she have come into this Project of her Woman's, for borrowing the Forty Pieces of any of her professed humble Servants, could she possibly have hit on any other Method to obtain it — but the Case was very necessitous, and she was in hopes, by some Turn of Luck, some Trick upon her Spouse, or good Oeconomy in her House-keeping and Expences, to be able to discharge the Obligation in a short Time.

Though *Melinda* was thus firm and resolute against all the undermining Attacks of her Maid to overthrow her Virtue, yet *As-*
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patia had Cunning enough to keep her Mistress's invincible Purity to herself, and continued to flatter her Benefactors with Hopes of one Day enjoying *Melinda's* Favours, and by this Means kept herself constantly in Fee with them; managing the Affair with so much Dexterity, that her Lady could not perceive her Servant to be bribed to the Interest of her Admirers; nor could the Lovers, who, by *Aspatia's* Artifice and Cunning, interpreted every little Look, Action, or Word of *Melinda's* in their own Favour, think their Money thrown away upon her Woman.

Aspatia no sooner arrived at Lord —'s, in a Hackney Coach, but she was introduced to his Lordship; he being at that Time alone, and perhaps in Expectation of some Lady coming in that Manner to visit him, which was very frequent. — The first Entrance of *Aspatia* put his Spirits in the highest Emotion of Joy, as he imagined that she was come to bring him Tidings of this being the destined Hour that she had so long promised him to arrive, when he was to possess the charming *Melinda*. — But, how did his Countenance change, his Tongue falter, his Limbs tremble! when she apprized him of *Melinda's* ill Luck at Play having rendered her under the Necessity of borrowing Forty Guineas of his Lordship, which she promised

mised to return as soon as ever it lay in her Power.

Tho' Lord — loves Play to Excess, yet such is his natural and, it may be said, hereditary Covetousness, that he grudges every Shilling which he expends on any other Occasion; nor did he think the Enjoyment of *Melinda* worth forty Guineas, much less the Honour of obliging her, for which perhaps he should only receive Thanks.——

However, he refused her in as civil a Manner as he possibly could, desiring *Aspatia* to assure her Lady, that Nothing could give him greater Uneasiness than to be almost destitute of Money himself, at the Time when she wanted any for her Service; solemnly protesting that he had been obliged to pay several large Bills that Morning, otherwise he should have had it in his power.——

But that if it would be of any Use to her in a Month's Time, when he expected some Cash from his Steward in the Country, then she might certainly depend upon commanding him.——A Month's Time his Lordship well knew was an Age for a Debt of Honour to wait for Payment, unless some Equivalent was deposited for Security.——

Nevertheless, *Aspatia* had the Courage, or rather Impudence, term it which you please, to demand whether his Lordship could not borrow such a small Sum of some of his

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Friends,

Friends, at so critical a Juncture.—Alack, my Dear! says he to her,—Those that I could have made free with are all out of Town, and you know a Man of my Rank must not run himself under Obligations to every one for Trifles. *Aspatia* retired back to her Hackney Coach, and return'd home to *Melinda* with a sorrowful Account of her ill Success.

My Lord ——'s Covetousness quite disheartened *Melinda* from any farther Application on this Score to her Admirers; but though *Aspatia* had stood the Rebuff, yet she was not so soon dejected as her Mistress; and therefore proposed that *Melinda* should write a Line to the Earl of ——, and she would be the Bearer of it. This *Melinda* would by no Means consent to, as she knew not into whose Hands the Letter might chance to fall, either by Willfulness, or Neglect; but agreed to send a verbal Message to him, as she had done before to Lord ——, if *Aspatia* would comply to carry it.—But as for any thing of this Nature being transacted under her own Hand, she would by no means consent to.—After much Debate upon this Affair, one being for the Letter, the other for the Message, *Aspatia* at last submitted to her Lady's Commands, and undertook the Embassy.

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She hastned away to the Earl of —'s House, and had the Fortune to find him at home and alone ; which latter he seldom used to be, as he was a Man of much Business, tho' greatly addicted to Pleasure.——

Aspatia, who was not so well acquainted with the Earl as with the former Peer, delivered the Message to him in as handsome a Manner as she could dress it up ; and went farther than her Lady's Commission, by assuring him, that in return for this Obligation, he might expect all the Favours that lay in her power, as soon as an Opportunity should serve.——The Earl was not at all discontented or displeased with her Message, but made Answer, that *Melinda* might command that, or any thing else of him, whensoever she pleased ; and should be glad to know where he was to wait on her with the Money, or whether she would do him the honour to call at his House in the Evening before she went to Lady *B*——'s, where she might come, if she pleased, unknown to any one, and he should be ready at home to obey her Commands. The cunning *Aspatia* told the Earl that her Lady had too much regard for her Reputation to make any Appointment of meeting his Lordship, neither would the Watchfulness of her old Husband permit her the Liberty of doing it, had she ever so much Inclination ; and as to coming *incog.* to his House, it was impracticable, as his Lordship

kept so many Servants ; to some or other of whom she must be exposed, and might perhaps be known. Therefore she desired of him to let her be the Bearer of the Money to *Melinda* ; and that his Lordship would have the Patience to wait 'till a favourable Opportunity offered, when her Mistress might pay him her Acknowledgments without incurring the Danger of any Scandal.

Madam, replied the Earl, I should be proud of the Honour of obliging such a fine Lady as *Melinda*, but as I am not so well certified as I could wish, of the Reality of your Commission from her, having never before seen your Person, to my Remembrance, you must therefore excuse my complying with your Request, until I receive farther Credentials from your Lady, that the Money which she expects me to deposit, is for her Use, and will be safely convey'd to her, through your Hands. I am very sorry that I can't so well rely on your Message as I could wish to do, but there are so many Tricks play'd with People of Fashion now-a-days, that it behoves us to look well at Forty Guineas before we part with it.

Aspatia return'd home to her Lady, very much disconcerted at the Earl's Distrust, and her Mistress's Disappointment. While they were laying their Heads together again how
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to procure the Money, behold *Marcus* passed through the Street, as they perceived from the Window of *Melinda's* Apartment. Him they knew to be a Man every Way fit for their Purpose, as he was rich, generous, and good-natured, yet loved Play, Women, and Wine; was intimate with old *Lorenzo*, and sometimes spent the Evening with him over a Bottle, for want of better Company. It was immediately agreed, that *Aspatia* should follow him and seek an Opportunity of opening the Affair to him. She was not long before she overtook *Marcus*, just as he was crossing a Square, out of the reach of all Hearers, where she made her Addreses to him, and inform'd him of her Lady's Distress. He received her Message with his usual Complaisance, but protested that it was entirely out of his Power to assist *Melinda* at that Instant, as he had the Misfortune himself to lose considerably at Play, the Night before. But told *Aspatia*, that he would take a turn into the City in the Afternoon, and try what could be done to procure the Money, and would certainly be back again early in the Evening, when he did not doubt but to wait on *Melinda* with the Money, time enough for her to save her Honour with the sharpening Captain at Lady B——'s. And to prevent any Notice being taken, he would contrive to send old *Lorenzo* an Appointment to meet and crack a Bottle at the Tavern, where he should

should be sure to fix him before the Hour of his Return from the City.

Aspatia flew back to her Mistress overjoy'd with the comfortable Promise of the Money, and tho' *Melinda* could willingly have excused his waiting on her with it personally, as it certainly must put her to some Confusion, and occasion many Blushes, yet, as she found it was to be had by no other means, she rested contented, and the more so as *Marcus* was well acquainted with her Husband, had often address'd her in private, and she believed him to be too much a Man of Honour to betray her, on this or any other Occasion. However, she gave *Aspatia* a strict Charge to stay with her 'till the Time of his Arrival, and even then not to stir out of the Room 'till *Marcus* left it.

It was Winter Time, and Six in the Evening was the appointed Hour for *Marcus's* Return; who took care, according to his Promise, to send *Lorenzo* an Invitation to meet him at the *Bedford-Head*, and spend the Evening. *Melinda* and he dined together about three, and the Old Gentleman being always punctual to such Engagements, went to the Tavern immediately after Dinner. While she and *Aspatia* sat down to Picquet together, in order to pass the Time away. But Six o'Clock came, and no *Marcus* being
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return'd, they flung up the Cards, and sat fretting about an Hour longer, when they heard a Wrap at the Door, and judg'd rightly that it was him.

Marcus had been obliged to dine in the City along with some of his Acquaintance, who were pretty free Drinkers, and being overjoyed at the Opportunity of obliging *Melinda* with the Money, whom he mightily admired, had taken a Bottle too much after Dinner, in order to exhilarate his Spirits against the Hour of Rendezvous; so that he appeared very much flustered with Drinking.

He immediately begg'd her Pardon for making her wait so long, but assured her, that he could not possibly complete the Business sooner; and laying the Forty Guineas, in a rich work'd Purse, which he had bought on purpose, at her Feet, told her, on his Knees, that his whole Fortune was at her Devotion, begg'd that she would be no longer cruel to one that had long endured so much for her; and rising up hastily to take her in his Arms, they heard a knocking at the Street-Door, which she immediately guessed to be her Husband, and so it happened.

They were then in her Woman's Apartment, which was just over *Lorenzo's* Bed-Chamber, and *Assatia* had staid there all the
Time

Time, as her Mistress commanded.—So whipping up the Candle, she begged of *Marcus* to stay there in the Dark, 'till she could either come, or send *Aspatia* to release him ; who immediately followed her Mistress down Stairs, having too much Caution to trust her self in a Room with a Gentleman in Liquor. Old *Lorenzo* having waited so long at the Tavern, and not finding *Marcus* come, grew out of Patience ; so, having drank his Bottle, and meeting with no other Company to his Mind, was return'd home sooner than he designed, or his Lady and *Aspatia* desired ; and he being somewhat vex'd at his Disappointment, resolved to betake himself to bed. As for *Melinda*, she took a Book in her Hand as though she would sit down to reading.

Marcus in the mean time, had laid himself down on a Couch that was in the Room above Stairs, and the Fumes of the Liquor he had drank soon laid him asleep, when some how or other, endeavouring to turn himself, he fell down on the Floor, just as old *Lorenzo* was getting into Bed ; and not immediately recollecting the Place where he was, fell to knocking and thundering against the Floor, calling out for his Man *Will*, imagining that he had fallen out of his own Bed.

Old *Lorenzo* was pretty thick of Hearing, as is usual for People of his Years to be, so that he was not appriz'd of the first Noise made by *Marcus's* Fall ; tho' it much alarm'd and exceedingly frightened *Melinda*, who was with her Woman in the Dining-Room, which was on the same Floor with her Husband's Bed-Chamber ; and *Marcus* still continuing knocking and calling, she could not imagine why he should make such a Noise in such an improper Place, unless he was subject to Fits, and taken in one. While she was thus terrified, *Marcus* not as yet come to his sober Senses, wond'ring his Man *Will* did not come to him, fell to knocking and bawling louder than ever, insomuch that his Noise reach'd old *Lorenzo's* dunny Ears ; and it being a Time of much Robbing and House-breaking, the old Man could conjecture no otherwise from the Noise, but that Thieves had broke into the House, and were knocking down the Things in the Room over his Head : therefore he endeavoured to rise and call for his Servants, and examine what the Matter was.

Melinda hearing her Spouse stirring, ran to him exceedingly frightened, as well she might, and clinging round his old Carcase, begs of him, for her Sake and his own, not to expose himself to Danger, for that he Villains which were got into the House would cer-

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tainly kill them all, if they offered to stir, *Marcus* still kept knocking and bawling, *Aspatia* sat trembling in the Dining-Room, and the old Man striving to get up and ring the Bell for his Servants, who were, happily, so loudly diverting themselves at Romps with the Maids in the Kitchen, that they heard not the least of the Uproar above. *Melinda*, by the Closeness of her Embraces, and Violence of her Fears, kept old *Lorenzo* fast down in his Bed, 'till growing rather too obstreperous, she called aloud for her Maid *Aspatia*, and bid her go see what the Matter was above Stairs.

Aspatia, knowing too well how Things went to need much Instruction, catches up the Candle, which she immediately let fall again, runs out, and shutting the Bedchamber Door, either from a pretended or real Confusion, double locks it upon her Master and Lady, by which Address neither of them could stir out ; so, getting another Candle, she runs up Stairs to *Marcus* and tells him what Disturbance he had made, and the Mischief that was likely to come of it. The Amaze at seeing *Aspatia*, and finding where he was, soon brought him sober, and made him begin to think of withdrawing thence ; which he happily effected, before the Servants were alarm'd.

Aspatia

Aspatia had the Thought to fling open the Room-Window which joined to some adjacent Leads, and conveying some few small Utensils out of the Room, she called up all the Footmen, ran down to *Melinda's* Bed-chamber, opened the Door, acquainted her and *Lorenzo*, that there were Thieves in the House, who had plundered the Apartment over-head. The whole Family was alarm'd, the House searched all over, the Things missed, but no Thieves found, only the Window that looked out upon the Leads being wide open, they all wisely conjectured, that the Rogues had taken that Way to make their Escape. So two of the stoutest of the Footmen being order'd to sit up all Night to watch, the rest of the Family went to Bed, and slept the Remainder of the Night very quietly, except *Melinda* and her Maid, who were too much frighten'd with the Adventure; and the former could get no rest, from this Night's Accident having prevented her going to Lady B——'s, to pay her Debt of Honour to the biting Captain. However, she went the next Evening a visiting to a Lady's that lov'd Play, and where she expected to meet with him; who coming, as she guessed, after having excused herself by a sudden Disorder, (as it really was) from not meeting him the Night before, she paid him his Winnings, and so got clear of this Adventure,

venture, which otherwise might have cost her very dear.

This Accident could not make *Melinda* forsake her Habit of Gaming, which she still continued ; and by Thriftiness and good Management at home, and Luck abroad, she soon recovered her Losses ; but by being unwary in her Conduct, and keeping of late Hours, her Husband at last became appriz'd how she spent her Evenings. Although he found himself no Sufferer by her Playing, yet, as he knew full well the dangerous Consequences that often attend that Vice, when young Ladies like her become addicted to it, he forbid her, in the mildest Manner possible, to continue that odious Diversion, as would thereby certainly incur his utmost Displeasure ; and did not fail representing to her the Evils that often accrue from that Diversion, in the most glaring Colours.

Melinda seemed to listen to his Documents, and as she dared not contradict his Will in so interesting a Point, for Fear of coming in for her Thirds only, at his Decease, she pretended to have quite forsook her old Pastime ; and to make *Lorenzo* believe that she was about a thorough Reformation, she frequented the Church as much as she had formerly done Assemblies ; and seemed as intent upon her Duty at home, as she had been before upon
 Quadrille

Quadrille abroad. Though this agreeable change in her Life pleased the old Man exceedingly, yet he was not to be so easily weaned from his Bottle and Company, after taking to it afresh, but still kept on in his old Method, seldom returning from the Tavern 'till very late, and fully doz'd with Wine, upon which he would go to Bed, and sleep for six or seven Hours without waking.

Tho' *Melinda* pretended to become such a pious Devotee, yet her Heart still languished after her forbidden Pastime, the Temptation to which came so forcibly upon her, that she began to devise some new Artifice to deceive her old Husband. In order to which, she at first endeavoured to persuade her Maid to get into her Place in Bed, after *Lorenzo* was fallen asleep, and lie there 'till she should return from Play, which she would be sure to do before the old Man wak'd; alledging that if it should happen otherwise, and that *Lorenzo* should wake before her Pastime was finished, that *Aspatia* had nothing to do but to counterfeit a deep Sleep, and *Lorenzo* would not perceive the Difference; neither need she be under any Apprehensions of his meddling with her, as the old Gentleman seldom diverted himself that way; and she would, if possible, always take care sufficiently to slacken his Nerves, and allay his Heat again those Nights that she design'd to ramble abroad

abroad in. *Aspatia* very obediently replied to her Mistress, that she was in no Fear of whatever, in such a Case, her Master should attempt, as she did not imagine that any thing could happen from the most vigorous of his Embraces. But her greatest Dread was, that *Melinda* should stay too long, and either Day-light or some other Accident, should discover the Cheat, which would certainly be of very bad Consequence to them both. Her Mistress told her, that she would take care for that, and always be home again before *Lorenzo* wak'd. Well, Madam, says *Aspatia*, look to it that you do, or else you may chance to lose a delicate Morsel for your Breakfast. Whatever I happen to lose, says *Melinda*, I fancy you'll be no great Gainer by it. This Project being agreed on, was soon put in Execution, and succeeded very well for some time, without *Lorenzo's* being appriz'd of his new Bedfellow : and as stolen Pleasures are sweetest, so *Melinda* took more Delight than ever in the innocent Recreation of Gaming.

Lorenzo, whose usual Wine was Old Port, had been one Evening engag'd with some Companions that delighted in rich Champagne and Burgundy. The old Gentleman had play'd his Part among them pretty well, and whether it was owing to the Generousness of the Wine he had drank, or to *Melinda's* Neglect

Neglect to keep his Spirits down, so it happened, that after *Aspatia* had got to Bed to him as usual, and he had taken a Nap of about two Hours, she found him begin to awake and seem very restless; when turning himself about suddenly, he began to kiss her with great Eagerness, and laying his Thigh across hers, she found his Hand roving very freely about her Body; she had no other Way but to lie still and counterfeit Sleep, submitting herself quietly to the old Gentleman's Liberties, lest her Voice should betray that she was not the Person whom he took her for. Though *Aspatia's* Limbs might not be so soft and finely polished as her Mistress's, yet did not *Lorenzo* perceive the Difference, but let his Hand wander on, 'till at last it arrived at the Summit of *Venus's Mount*, which in *Aspatia* happened to be more supplied with mossy Tufts and shady Bowers than in *Melinda*: whether proceeding from a fuller Maturity of Years, or a greater Excess in the radical Moisture of the Soil, is submitted to the Determination of those *Virtuosos* that are skill'd in natural Philosophy.

As *Lorenzo* had not trespassed for some time past upon the Border's of Love's Territories, he imputed the Alteration in the Fertility of the Ground to the growing Ripeness of the Soil, and increasing Warmth of the Climate, the fresh Air of which enlivened
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his vital Faculties to such a Degree, that he passed on boldly to the Temple of *Cytherea*, and perform'd his Rites at Love's Altar, with more Alacrity than was usual with him; insomuch that it in some measure recompenced the submissive *Aspatia* for the many lingering Hours which she had waited in that Place for her Mistress, who happened to arrive just as *Lorenzo* was doing his utmost to convince her (as he thought) that his Years had not got the better of his natural Vigour.

Melinda was always obliged, at her Return, to enter the Chamber as softly as she could, for fear of awaking her Husband, the Door being left open on those Nights, for fear it should crack when she enter'd: but she had scarce set Foot in the Bedchamber when she thought she heard the old Gentleman very busy with his Bedfellow; she stood still a little to listen, and soon found that it really was as she imagined; so prudently withdrew herself softly into the next Room, leaving *Aspatia* to make the best of her old Fumbler; tho' not without some vexation at missing that Benevolence she had been so long without.

The old Man, thoroughly fatigued with the Ardour of the Conflict, soon fell asleep again, and *Aspatia* was beginning to doze, when her Mistress, knowing that all was safe by her Husband's snoring, re-entered the
Chamber

Chamber, and *Aspatia* rising, she took her Place at the Back of her exhausted Bedfellow.

Things proceeded in this Manner for some Time. But as *Aspatia* and the Butler had kept a very intimate Correspondence together, either through his Skill, or her Master's unknown Endeavours, it so happened, that she grew more bulky than she chose to be. This her Mistress soon perceiv'd, but as she had intrusted her Maid so far in the Affair with old *Lorenzo*, she hardly durst take the liberty to enquire who had occasion'd that Extension of *Aspatia's* Petticoats; for her Belly, by this time became so very prominent, that it was judg'd not safe for her any longer to supply her Mistress's Place, lest the old Man should discover it, which would ruin all. *Aspatia* being a cunning Baggage, assured her Mistress that what had happened was occasioned by keeping her Place warm; tho' *Melinda* could hardly credit that it came purely by that Means, otherwise she might have found herself in the same Condition long before her Maid: however, as Matters stood at present, she durst not contradict it.

Melinda was so intoxicated with the Love of Gaming, that she was resolved to invent some new Method of deceiving her old Husband, that she might frequent her nocturnal Assemblies as usual, without either his Sus-
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picion

picion or Discovery. And as *Aspatia* was too near her Time to be trusted any longer in Bed with him, they contrived to make a Figure of stuffed Rags of *Melinda's* Size and Stature, which they dressed up with a Vizard Mask, one of her Smocks, and a Suit of Night-Clothes, and laid it in her Place every Night when *Lorenzo* was fallen asleep, and when *Melinda* was returned from Play, it was removed up Stairs again.

This Cheat succeeded exceeding well for a Month or two, when one Morning about four o' Clock, *Melinda* being at her usual Night Work, old *Lorenzo* happen'd to awake out of a very dreadful Dream of Ghosts, Spectres and Devils, occasion'd, it is very likely, from the Fumes of the Liquor he had drank the foregoing Evening. He turned towards his Lady in order to acquaint her with what a Fright he had been in, and laid his Hand directly on the Face of his dressed-up Bed-fellow, where finding a Nose and Mouth, without any Breath or Motion, he became exceedingly frightened, but more so, when on pushing, jogging and calling, it returned no Answer; so imagining his Wife was either in a Fit, or dead by his Side, he therefore rose hastily and rang the Bell for his Servants to bring him a Light, which being done, he taking the Candle in his Hand, approach'd the Bed to satisfy himself whether *Melinda* was alive or dead: but no sooner did he perceive

ceive how unlike to her was the Figure that lay in her Place, than he dropt the Light through Fear; and having been prepossessed from his Infancy, with a strong Opinion of Witches, Fiends and Hobgoblins, instantly imagined that it must be no other than some Devil could have made such a Transformation. He immediately went down Stairs and rais'd all the Servants with his Noise, but being in the Dark, could not get them together before *Melinda*, who was luckily got into the House as *Lorenzo* was inspecting the frightful Visage of his Bedfellow, was got into her Confidant's Apartment, and taking the Opportunity while the old Gentleman was crawling down Stairs, they instantly remov'd the Figure that had caus'd such an Alarm, and she slipp'd into its Place; where her Husband, on his Return to the Chamber with his Servants and Lights, found her, to his great Surprize, when he expected to have met with some Fiend. He had some how procur'd an old Sword below Stairs, with which he would have instantly dispatch'd his Wife, had not his Attendants prevented it, who were as much surpriz'd at their Master's Madness, as he was with the surprizing Metamorphosis of his Partner. What! cried he, thou Sorceress! thou Witch! thou Fiend! thou infernal Succubus! have I detected thee at last? *Melinda*, surpriz'd at his Language, was just going to reply in her own Justification; but he being

too much in a Passion to hear a Word of Reason, went on raving like a Bedlamite. Thou Witch, cried he, be gone instantly to thy hellish nocturnal Sacrifices, and quit my Bed from this Moment for ever! If these Hands be mine, said he, addressing himself to his Servants, it was not she that laid in this Place just now, but the grand Devil himself, or one of his Imps, was foisted in her room. I think certainly I am able to distinguish Flesh when I feel it. Be gone, thou Hag, I conjure thee, or thou instantly dyest. Saying this, he quitted the Room in a violent Rage: And *Melinda* fearing to trust too far to the Effects of his Madness and Passion, soon slipped on her Clothes and quitted the House.

She immediately retreated to a Lady's House who was her Friend, to whom she discovered the whole Secret of the Transformation, and endeavour'd thro' her Means, who was nearly related to *Lorenzo*, to get the old Gentleman to pardon her Transgression, with a strict Promise of conjugal Obedience to his Commands for the future. But notwithstanding all the Endeavours of *Melinda* and her Friend, old *Lorenzo* was fully persuaded that his Wife had Dealings with the Devil, would not be beat out of his Notion, but obstinately persisted in an implacable Aversion to bedding any more with her, or suffering her to come under his Roof, whom he look'd upon as a more expert

pert Sorcerers than Mother *Shipton* is reported to have been : So that *Melinda* was forced to live retired for some Time, upon the small Income that he was pleased to allow her for Subsistence. This Misfortune affording her Leisure to reflect on and curse the immoderate Love of Gaming, which had thus plung'd her into so much Anxiety and Trouble in her youthful Days

She continued to lead this disconsolate Life, worse to her than Widowhood, above two Years ; during which, she conceived an invincible Hatred to her Husband for this Usage to her, scorning the Imputation of a Witch upon any other Account than her Beauty. As for *Aspatia*, she yet continued with her Mistress, and partook Share of her cloudy Days as well as she had done those of her Sunshine ; and was delivered of a jolly Boy, soon after this unfortunate Discovery of her Lady's Gaming had driven them both out of Doors from old *Lorenzo's*, so that they were pretty hard set to maintain the Youngster out of their small Allowance ; however, *Melinda* had him taken care of at her Expence, as *Aspatia* always vouch'd that he had not come into the World had she not been so dutiful to her Commands as to take her place in Bed with the old Gentleman.

As *Lorenzo* encreased in Years, so his Constitution grew daily more impair'd ; and his Servants finding him too infirm to inspect into
Family

Family Affairs, vex'd him so much by their continual Impositions and Knavery, that he began to wish he had not been so rash in his Anger as to part from his Wife; and even to wish for her home again to keep his House in Order, that he might grunt in his Arm'd-Chair, under the Afflictions of his Body, without those Troubles of Mind, which their outrageous Mismanagement caus'd him to undergo. . But though he made many Overtures to *Melinda* for a Reconciliation with her, yet the Violence of her Hatred towards him would not allow her to kearken to any Terms, neither could she entertain any Thoughts of returning again to the wither'd Arms of threescore and ten.

It was in vain that the Lady, her Friend, whom she liv'd with, endeavour'd to persuade her to relinquish her Antipathy, and reconcile her Obedience to her Interest, as she had brought old *Lorenzo* to such a good Inclination, by clearing up the Mystery of her Transformation to him, that was desirous of again admitting *Melinda* to her old Place, upon a hearty Promise of a thorough Reformation on her Side, from the Folly of Gaming. But whatever might be the real Occasion of such a strong Distaste in her, she absolutely refus'd coming to any Agreement with her old Hunks.

Thus Time pass'd on, and this obdurate Reluctance of *Melinda* to any Reconciliation,

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occasion'd as much Grief to old *Lorenzo* as his former Rashness had given to her; so he had recourse to his last Remedy on this Occasion, which was, to take to his Bed and pretend violent Sickness; and to make the Matter sooner credited, he caus'd it every Day to be given out that he grew worse and worse; this News soon reach'd the Ears of *Melinda*, who hearing how ill he was, and judging from his great Years, that there was little or no hopes of his Recovery, submitted to the Advice of her Friend, and agreed to pay her Husband a farewell Visit, as she judg'd it would be the last time of her ever seeing him alive. So together they went, and at the Entrance into his House perceiv'd nothing but Sorrow and Dejection in every Countenance; they were immediately, on their Arrival, conducted to the Door of the sick Gentleman's Chamber, where some of the Servants with a gloomy Silence, and others with Sobs and Groans, exprest their Grief for the near Departure of their old Master.

But how was *Melinda* surpris'd, when on entering the Room, she perceived a most sumptuous Banquet prepared, at which were present several of her Husband's Friends and Acquaintance, the old Man being seated in an Elbow-Chair at the Head of them? He directly got up, as well as he was able, and embraced her with all the Eagerness he was capable of, begging in the most moving Terms,

Terms, that she would forgive his former Behaviour, for which he express'd the greatest Sorrow, and agree to be reconciled with him. All the Company join'd their Sollicitations to his Entreaties, and *Melinda* not being prepared for so strong and unexpected an Attack, could not make so stubborn a Resistance as she would otherwise have done, had she not been taken so disadvantageously.

The Company being willing to give her Time to recover her Surprise, perceiving that she was not thoroughly inclined to yield to their Persuasions, begg'd of her to sit down to Table, as there was Cause to hope for the bringing of her to Reason after Dinner, tho' she would not immediately comply with their Request for a thorough Reconciliation: Overcome by their unanimous Entreaties, she and the Lady her Friend took their Places; and the Bottle passing pretty freely after Dinner, Matters were so well adjusted, that *Melinda* consented to go to Bed again to her Husband, who received her with the greatest Satisfaction on his Part, 'tho perhaps the Pleasure she found in this Renewal of their Friendship was not so exquisite as she might expect.

Fortune seem'd now to be intent upon recompencing *Melinda* for the melancholy Hours she had formerly pass'd in her Separation from her Husband, or rather from the Participation of his Riches; for whether the old Gentleman exerted himself too vigorously
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for his Years, on the Renewal of the *Hymenial* Joys, or whether it was occasion'd by a Decay of Nature, yet so it happen'd, and no doubt much to her Satisfaction, that she found herself in the long wish'd-for State of Widowhood, soon after her Reconciliation to her Husband, who to convince her of his Love and Affection, and of his thorough Oblivion of all past Faults, left her in the Possession of a much better Fortune than she had Reason to expect from an old Man whom she had been so careless to oblige during her cohabiting with him.

Melinda had not been long a Widow before the *Eclat* of her Youth, Beauty and Fortune drew together many Suitors; and amongst the rest that made Address to her was *Sparkish*, a handsome, gay young Fellow, born in the Kingdom of *Ireland*, but of no great Family or Estate, except a small Commission that he had in the Army. He, however, had received a liberal Education, though he misapplied it in his detestable Practices; and was above all endued with a most destructive inveigling tongue, which had more than once been fatally employed, to the Ruin of many a Female. With this forcible Battery he plied *Melinda* so strongly that she soon began to capitulate, and agreed to surrender to him upon the honourable Conditions of Matrimony. This was all that *Sparkish* wanted, nay he could even have dispensed with the Ceremony, if there had

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been any other Means of obtaining her Possessions, the Enjoyment of which he more coveted than that of her Person, having been a Libertine from his Infancy, and had much improved himself in those Principles since his Entrance into the Army.

They had not been married above half a Year, before he was obliged to go to *Flanders*. She was so fond of him that she would fain have accompanied him, even into the Bed of Honour; but he would not permit it, alledging all the Dangers and Fatigues that attended the making of a Campaign as invincible Reasons for her remaining at home in Safety; tho' this Tenderness of his did not proceed so much from a Regard to her Ease, as to his own vicious Pleasures, to which he imagined her Presence would be a very great Obstruction. His Appetite for Variety made him loath her Embraces, and he had considerably sunk her Fortune before he left her, by paying some extravagant Debts which he had contracted before he was married to her; so that tho' he took his Leave in the most complaisant and tender Manner, yet he design'd never to see her more.

When *Sparkish* arrived at the Army in *Flanders*, he lived agreeable to his Inclination; that is to say, in the most dissolute and debauch'd Manner: but happening to be wounded at the Battle of *Tournay*, he quitted the Camp and retired to an adjoining Town, where

where he changed his Name and took upon him that of *Bellair* ; and immediately caused Letters to be wrote to *Melinda*, and his Friends in *England*, containing a certain Account of his being killed in the Action ; which fictitious Piece of News had like to have killed her in Reality ; however her Youth, and the Goodness of her Constitution, got the better of this imaginary Misfortune.

He still continued in the *Netherlands*, where he married about a Twelvemonth after, a young Woman of good Family and Fortune, that had fallen passionately in love with him. With this second Lady he lived about six Months, in the most profuse Manner ; when finding that her Fortune was not sufficient to support his Extravagancy, he bethought himself of making a Retreat from her also. In order to which, he pretended he would go to the *Hague* to get a Colonel's Commission in one of the new raised Regiments in the *Dutch* Service ; to which she was obliged to give her Consent, tho' not without the greatest Reluctance. But he, instead of going to *Holland*, embarked immediately for *England*, where he continued to pass, by the Name of *Bellair*, for a Foreigner.

He had not been long here before he got acquainted with one *Rightly*, a Gentleman who had for some time been making his Addresses to *Preciosa*, an elderly Lady worth much Money, and most rigidly devoted to

that modern Sect, called Methodists, but of such an obdurate Heart to Love or Marriage, that *Rightly* could make nothing of her ; and being now grown intimate with *Bellair*, and despairing of any Success with his hard-hearted Saint, he discovered the whole of his Amour to his wild and inconstant Acquaintance.

Bellair understanding that the pious Lady was well endowed with Riches, immediately proposes to *Rightly*, that, out of Revenge for using his Friend so ill, he himself would undertake to wed her, tho' she were old ; and that in return, he would assist him in obtaining a beautiful young Widow not exceeding Twenty-two Years of Age, whose Husband was killed at the Battle of *Tournay*. *Rightly* hearken'd to his Proposal very attentively, as the religious Lady's ill Reception of him had occasioned his relinquishing all farther Thoughts of overcoming her Obstinacy ; but assured his Friend *Bellair*, that as the Lady was so bigotted to *Whitefield's* Doctrine, he very much despaired of his having any Success with her ; however, if he had Courage enough to make the Trial, he assured him that he would be no Obstacle to his gaining her ; and demanded of him how he would make good the Advantage which he was to expect in return from the young Widow, whom he had promised to help him to ; Oh well enough replied *Bellair*, I have no more
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to do than to deliver this Ring, which shall serve you for your Passport——It was her Husband's Signet, who gave it to me a few Hours before he expired of his Wounds. Upon saying this, he pluck'd the Ring from off his Finger, and delivered it to *Rightly*, bidding him make the best Use of it to his own Advantage, and directed him where this young and beautiful Widow lodg'd ; he gave him Assurances also that she was worth Money.—*Rightly* took the Ring, fully resolved to proceed upon this new Adventure, as *Bellair* was to try his Success with the bigotted Lady *Precisia*. Impatient with the Hopes of obtaining a Wife with such a good Fortune as he understood *Precisia* to be, *Bellair* did not hesitate the least on her Age, as he hoped that the Depth of her Years would free him from her the sooner, but soon got Intelligence to what Congregation of Methodists she resorted, and straightway took a devout Opportunity of repairing thither to worship his golden Idol, whom he could not possibly mistake, as his Friend *Rightly* had described her so well to him, and had also told him the Seat which she constantly sat in when at her Devotion. *Bellair* had not long placed himself in the adjoining Seat, with his Face opposite to her Place, but the Lady came in. During the Time of Service he behav'd himself as dexterously as though he had been many Years one of *Whitfield's* Followers ;
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he sigh'd as she sigh'd, hum'd where he ought to hum, and shook his Head in as right Time as the most disciplin'd Methodist present, and could have wept upon Occasion had the Preacher's Discourse been powerful enough to have melted any of the Congregation. She took no farther notice of him at the first Meeting, than regarding him as a very pious Stranger; which occasioned her inquiring amongst all her Acquaintance if they knew any thing of him, but all answered in the Negative. *Bellair* continued his Practice of Piety for about a Fortnight longer, without perceiving that she took any particular Notice of his Zeal, 'till at last he found she remarked his Motions to such a Degree, that he began to fancy all her Devotion was directed to him.

As they were one Day coming out of the Place, the pious Lady chanc'd to stumble, and *Bellair*, who like the Devil, was constantly at her Elbow, happily saved her from falling; this afforded him an Opportunity of making her a Compliment, which she received exceeding kindly. He, with all the Gravity imaginable, express'd his Sense of her Civility, and, with a low Bow, was for taking leave of her; but she, not designing to part with him so soon, told him, that if he had not a Coach of his own, hers should carry him to his Lodgings; and he well knowing it to be contrary to his Interest to re-
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fuse such a Kind Favour from the old Lady, was too polite not to accept of it, which he readily did, upon Condition that he might first wait on her home in it. This being agreed on they roll'd away to her Door, where *Bellair* was again going to take his leave with the utmost Respect, but she very engagingly invited him to take Share of her Dinner, if he was not provided with a better; to which he replied, that were he engaged to any thing, excepting his immediate Duty to Heaven, he would forsake it, for once, to be happy in the Enjoyment of her excellent and pious Conversation.

At Dinner they eat pretty heartily and talk'd but little; but the Repast being over, they thunder'd it off in a Repetition of what they had heard from the good Man in the Morning. This continued for some time, but at last they fell upon other Matters, and the Result of their Discourse was, that they could not be happy without the Pleasure of each other's obliging and innocent Conversation, which they mutually promised to give themselves as often as possible. At Nine in the Evening they parted, she possessed with a most pernicious Passion for his Person and seeming Piety, and he with a most inexpressible Veneration for her Money.

The next Evening he met his good Friend *Rightly*, to whom he related his Success, demanding what News from his beautiful Widow?

dew? Alas! replies the other, she is very sorrowful for the Account that I brought her; so that I have not had the Courage or Confidence to propose any such Matter to her as yet. She is admirably beautiful! and, no Doubt, sincerely virtuous! You love her then, replied *Bellair*. Can you blame me, said *Rightly*, for having a Value for her Excellencies? *Bellair* having an Engagement on his Hands, they parted for the present, he being not a little chagrined to hear his Friend extol the young Widow's Perfections so much. But the next Visit to his pious Mistress soon banished Displeasure, and he plied the old Lady so warmly, that in about three Weeks after, they were married.

Precisia at first imagined that she had got a Saint of a Husband, and one of the most tractable in the Universe; but he was not so much blinded in her, having made himself before acquainted with all her Frailties, which Knowledge he improved to his Advantage. for he caressed her continually, never drank but in her Company, and constantly went with her to hear the precious Man; which Manner of Behaviour continuing for about two Months, so won her Heart, that she could not conceal a Shilling of her Money from him.

Rightly, in the mean while underwent far greater Difficulties in his Suit to *Melinda*; her Grief for the supposed Loss of her beloved Husband,

Husband seem'd more and more unsurmountable; but his Love being as invincible, their Nuptials also were celebrated, tho' without the Knowledge of *Bellair*, who had avoided seeing *Rightly* ever since he had gained his own Ends of the devout *Precisia*, fearing that he might chance to meet his own *Melinda* with him some time or other, and therefore he propos'd to his Spouse *Precisia* to retire about fifty Miles from *London*, in order, as he made her believe, to live the more frugal upon her Fortune, and avoid the extraordinary Expences of a Town Life.

This the old Lady readily embraced, as she imagined that in the Solitude of the Country she should have the more of his engaging Company. But it happened unluckily, that in a Day or two after they had fixed upon this Resolution of retiring into the Country, *Rightly* and the unfortunate *Melinda*, then his Bride, came to pay the old Lady a Visit, not knowing but she was still single; not as he intended it out of Kindness, but only to shew how bravely he had broken her Chain. As they were coming up the Stairs, *Bellair* chanc'd to hear his Friend's Voice, and immediately conjecturing how Matters were, he prudently slip't into his Bed-Chamber, leaving his new Bargain to receive and entertain the Guests, which she did for some time; but at length growing impatient at his not making his Appearance, she began to

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call him to welcome his Friends, but he making no Answer, she ran into the Bed Chamber and ask'd him why he would not come and see his old Friend *Rightly* and his Lady? No, Madam, answered he, Mr. *Rightly* is your old Friend, and for that Reason I will not see him; so pray go and excuse me in the best Manner you can. Alas, my Dear, says she, you have not the least Cause to be jealous; but I shall endeavour to make an Apology for you. Which she did pretty handsomely, by telling them he was very ill with some thing that lay heavy at his Stomach. However, his Mind, at their Departure, being discharged of the Fear it lay under, he told her the next Morning, that he would take a Ride as far as *Twickenham* for the Benefit of the Air; but whether he went that Way, or not, is unknown to this Day, as he has never been seen in *England* after that time, by her, or any of his Acquaintance that knew him by any of his Names; neither could the old Gentlewoman ever learn any Tidings of the pretty large Sum of Money that he convey'd away with him. He had the Assurance to leave a Letter directed for *Rightly*, which was brought to him by a Porter, the Day after *Bellair's* Departure, wherein he discovered himself to him, in hopes, as 'tis thought, to make him forsake the innocent *Melinda*, but *Rightly* had so much Respect to her Quiet and his own, that he

he burnt it; as he could impute his Project of setting him on to marry *Melinda*, to be done with no other Intent than to prevent her suing him for Bigamy.

Neither did *Rightly* ever disturb the Repose of *Melinda* about *Bellair*, 'till he was thoroughly certified, by an Officer of Distinction in the Army, that he fell in the last Battle we had with the *French*, at a Village called *Val*; having really purchased a Commission in the *Dutch* Service, with Part of the old Lady's Money that he had taken with him out of *England*. And when *Melinda* was made acquainted with these his notorious Transactions, she took his Loss with so little Regret that she and her Husband now live in the greatest Harmony and Felicity that can possibly attend the Marriage State. But the old doating *Precisia* soon came to her End, after the double Loss of her Money and Bedfellow.

F I N I S.

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